



# Charity & Children

The historic publication of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina—first to tell the story since 1887.

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BCH CEO David Melber brings remarks at The Cross at the Center ceremony that took place on May 11, 2026 at Mills Home in Thomasville, the ministry's first location established in 1885.

## The Cross at the Center—Event affirms a gospel-focused future

By Blake Ragsdale | Editor

**O**n May 11, 2026, board members, leadership, North Carolina Baptist representatives, current and former staff members, and alumni of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH), along with community members, gathered at Mills Home in Thomasville for a special ceremony. The day honored BCH's 141-year legacy while setting its course for the future—renewed and firmly rooted in the gospel as it continues serving vulnerable children, families, and individuals.

At the heart of that commitment stands a visible symbol: a 13-foot wooden cross installed just prior to the event. Appropriately named "The Cross at the Center," it now rests at the center of BCH's first location in Thomasville, originally established in 1885 by founder and pastor John Haymes Mills.

As attendees gathered for the day, it was impossible to miss seeing the wooden cross representing Christ's sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. As BCH CEO David Mel-



ber emphasized, that was precisely the intent. "The cross is the reminder of who we are, why we exist, and what must remain at the center of BCH for generations to come," David said. "For 141 years, BCH has continued to care for vulnerable children and families throughout seasons of hardship, cultural change, and tremendous growth. The one constant has been this—God's hand has sustained the BCH ministry through it all."

(Continued on page 3)

# May the cross always lead us

By David Melber | BCH Chief Executive Officer



I recently had the privilege of sharing a message during the dedication of a new cross on our Thomasville campus, a cross handcrafted from timbers preserved from the original Mitchell Cottage. That moment became more than a dedication ceremony. It became a reminder of who we are, why we exist, and what must remain at the center of this ministry for generations to come.

For 141 years, this ministry has stood as a testimony to the faithfulness of God. Across seasons of hardship, cultural change, and tremendous growth, Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina (BCH) has continued to care for vulnerable children and families while proclaiming the hope of Christ. If you walk our campuses or hear the stories of those impacted through the years, you quickly realize that God's hand has sustained this ministry through every generation.

Yet during the dedication, one truth stood above everything else: *the cross must remain at the center.*

The cross is both a symbol of suffering and a symbol of victory. It represents sacrifice, rejection, and death, but also forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy, and eternal life. At the cross, Jesus Christ willingly gave Himself so that sinners could be reconciled to a holy God. And today we do not celebrate a Savior still hanging on a cross. We celebrate a risen Savior whose empty tomb changed human history forever.

Throughout the message, I reflected on passages from 1 Peter 2 and John 12, where Scripture reminds us that following Christ involves surrender, sacrifice, and daily dependence upon Him. Jesus Himself declared, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." That principle continues to shape Christian ministry today. God often brings life through surrender, humility, and obedience.

That truth directly impacts the mission of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina.

As we seek to serve children and families across North Carolina, the center of our ministry cannot simply be our programs, our reputation, or even our long history. Those things matter, but they are not enough.

*A children's home without the cross is just an institution. A counseling ministry without the cross is simply therapy. A foster care ministry without the cross becomes only social work.*

Those things are valuable and necessary, but they cannot heal the deepest wounds of the human heart. They cannot rescue someone from sin. They cannot reconcile families to God. Only Jesus Christ can do that. *This is why the Gospel must remain central to everything we do.*

Today, North Carolina has more than 11,000 children in foster care. Families across our communities are struggling with brokenness, instability, addiction, mental health challenges, and generational hardship. The needs can feel overwhelming. Yet I believe this is precisely the moment for the Church to step forward with both truth and compassion.

*At BCH, we are praying for more churches to become engaged in this mission.* We want to equip pastors, foster parents, volunteers, small group leaders, and church members to better understand the realities many children and families face and to respond with Gospel-centered care and practical support. We want churches to become places where hurting people experience safety, connection, discipleship, restoration, and hope in Christ.

One of the most encouraging parts of this vision is recognizing that the ministry cannot remain confined to BCH's locations alone. *While BCH currently serves across numerous locations with hundreds of dedicated staff members, the future of ministry must increasingly involve local churches and believers step-*

*ping into their own communities to care for vulnerable children and struggling families.* Imagine thousands of churches across North Carolina equipped and engaged in this work. Imagine foster parents being raised up, church members prepared to walk with hurting families, and communities transformed through the power of the Gospel.

Most importantly, imagine children and families not only finding support and stability, but coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Imagine lives transformed eternally through the power of the Gospel. Imagine generations changed because someone chose to step into brokenness and faithfully point others to Christ.

During the dedication, I also reflected on the story from 2 Kings 6, where Elisha prayed that God would open the eyes of his servant to see the heavenly army surrounding them. It served as a reminder that while ministry often feels difficult and overwhelming, we are never operating alone. God is at work in ways we cannot always see, and He calls His people not to rely on human strength, but on His power and faithfulness.

The call of the cross also challenges each of us personally. Before it ever changes ministries or organizations, it changes hearts. The Christian life is a daily surrender of self—dying to pride, comfort, recognition, and control so that Christ may be seen more clearly through us. For those serving children and families, this means loving sacrificially, persevering faithfully, and continuing to proclaim the hope of Jesus even in difficult circumstances.

As I stood before that cross built from the old timbers of Mitchell Cottage, I was struck by the beauty of redemption woven into its story. Wood that once formed part of a children's cottage now stands as a visible declaration of the Gospel. In many ways, that reflects what God continues to do every day. He takes brokenness and transforms it for His glory.

*My prayer for Baptist Children's Homes is simple: that we would never drift from the cross.* We want every meeting, every ministry effort, every counseling session, every foster care placement, and every act of service to continue pointing people to Jesus Christ. And that generations from now, people will still be able to say that BCH remained faithful to the Gospel and committed to seeing children and families encounter the hope, redemption, and eternal life found only in Christ.

**Mission:**  
sharing hope . . . changing lives

**Vision:**  
To provide the highest quality of Christian services to children, adults and families in a caring culture of measurable excellence

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# Event affirms BCH's commitment to gospel focus

By Blake Ragsdale | Editor

(Continued from page 1)

The *Cross at the Center* ceremony carried meaning far beyond its program. In addition to the dedication the cross and affirming BCH's gospel focus, the gathering reflected the enduring importance of relationships and ministry partners.

"We're seeking to reach thousands of kids who are in the foster care system—over 11,000 just in NC," David Melber shared. "We cannot do this on our own.

We're designed to do it in partnership and in supporting the local church—the bride of Christ."

Todd Unzicker, Executive Director-Treasurer for the NC Baptist State Convention (NC Baptists), echoed that same call to partnership.

"On behalf of 3,400 churches from Murphy to Manteo in our great state, I'm here to tell you that we lock arms to be on mission together," Todd said. "We desire to see that we are the first state in our nation that eradicates child homelessness and that every child hears the good news of Jesus Christ."

That emphasis on partnership was not only spoken—it has long been lived. Clifton Lambreth, a BCH alumnus who lived at Mills Home from 1967-1978, recalled the life-shaping lessons he learned while living in Mitchell Cottage—BCH's first cottage, established in 1885.

"The cottage environment became a training ground for teamwork and community from cleaning the cottages, working together on campus projects, helping prepare meals, and care for one another," Clifton shared. "We learned that one of life's greatest lessons—people accomplish more when they work together.

"Perhaps the greatest gift BCH gave us was introducing us to Jesus Christ."

That legacy was deeply woven into the ceremony itself. Mitchell Cottage—and its role in BCH's earliest days—stood at the heart of the moment, connecting a Christ-centered mission to a future built on its foundation.

The courtyard at Mills Home, where the cross now stands, has been named "Mitchell Park," and the cross itself was crafted from white oak timbers that once served as floor joists—an integral part of the cottage's structure.

Named for Reverend John Mitchell, Mitchell Cottage was BCH's very first cottage and a symbol of a long-held dream. Mitchell, along with his friend John Haymes Mills and other Baptist leaders of their time, championed the dream of an orphanage that Baptists across

NC could unite behind. That dream became reality on November 11, 1885, when nine-year-old Mary Presson arrived and became the first child welcomed into BCH's care. With her arrival into

Mitchell Cottage, BCH was born marking the beginning of a legacy of care and life change that continues today.

"I really appreciated that the cross came out of the timbers of the Mitchell Cottage and then to name that park after it—that's so meaningful to the alumni," said Flora Hicks Patton who lived at Mills Home from 1968-1974. "And I actually accepted Christ as my Savior while living at Mills Home so it's all very important to me."

In addition, miniature wooden crosses, also crafted from timber from Mitchell Cottage, were distributed to attendees as keepsakes. They served as a tangible reminder of BCH's rich legacy and, as Board of Trustees Chair Steve Calhoun empha-

sized, the ministry's unwavering commitment to its mission.

"Your board of trustees for BCH is committed now more than ever before to have an even greater impact for the least of these," Steve remarked. "Through our celebration of the cross today, we are committed to keeping Christ the central focus so that more will

*"The cross is the reminder of who we are, why we exist, and what must remain at the center of BCH for generations to come."*

DAVID MELBER | BCH CEO

come to know Him."

Quintell Hill, a BCH trustee, church mobilization strategist with the International Mission Board, and Preaching/Teaching Elder at Multiply Community Church in Monroe, echoed that same conviction, emphasizing that the hope found in Christ's work on the cross is something everyone can rally around.

"The cross is at the center of history," he said. "It's good to see BCH highlight what is the

answer for all these children—it's Christ and what he's done on the cross."

More than a celebration of history or mission, the day served as a clear declaration of what sets BCH apart. At its core, the ministry's work is not defined by programs, but by the transforming power of the gospel—the only true source of hope and healing for the children, families, and individuals BCH serves across its statewide ministries.

"A children's home without the cross is an institu-

tion. A counseling program without the cross is just therapy. A foster care ministry without the cross is just social work," Melber said in his remarks. "All these things are good and needed, but they're not enough. They cannot heal what is most broken in a child or a person's heart. They cannot reconcile a family to God. They cannot break generational chains of sin and shame and despair, and they cannot make a stone dead heart-beat with life. Only the cross can do that."

Find the complete dedication video at [bchfamily.org/thecross](http://bchfamily.org/thecross)



BCH's Merilyn Moore greets alumnus Pete Knight.



Todd Unzicker, Baptist State Convention of NC Executive Director-Treasurer



Steve Calhoun, BCH Board of Trustees Chairperson

# Hagans prioritize reunification for Malik's family

By Lauren Hyatt | BCH Staff

When Malik first entered foster care, his story began like many others—marked by uncertainty, separation, and a long road ahead for his family. What makes this story different is not how it began. It is how it was lived out through his foster family's faith and perspective that prioritized the restoration of Malik's entire family.

## A prayer from the beginning

Malik came to live with Josh and Charity Hagan, a trained and licensed foster care family through Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). As the couple welcomed Malik into their home, they began the journey with prayer.

They prayed for safety. They prayed that Malik would encounter the love of Jesus in their home. And they prayed that one day, he could carry that love back to his own family.

"We always hoped that he would feel safe in our home, and that one day his home would be a safe place for him to return to," Charity said.

From the beginning, the Hagans understood their role was temporary. They embraced that reality, recognizing a truth often misunderstood in foster care: foster care is not about replacing families; it is about restoring them.

## Rooting for Malik's parents

From the first interaction, Josh and Charity made their intentions known to Malik's parents.

"We made it very clear to his parents from the beginning that we would love him as our own, care for him as our own, and fight for him as our own," Charity said, "but that we were rooting for them to do what needed to be done to bring him home."

The commitment shaped their approach to every aspect of care.

They stayed in regular contact with Malik's parents between visits. They sent photos and updates. They asked Malik's parents about his routines, preferences, and needs. They made space for conversations that extended beyond his care and into encouragement for his parents as individuals and as a family.

"We always checked with them about decisions regarding Malik," Charity said. "We sent pictures and remained super engaged with them."

*"We made it very clear to his parents from the beginning that we would love him as our own, care for him as our own and fight for him as our own," Charity said, "but that we were rooting for them to do what needed to be done to bring him home."both of their faces afterwards was worth everything."*

**CHARITY HAGAN**

## Making space for family

While working alongside the social worker at the county office of the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Hagans also looked for opportunities to create meaningful connection



Malik (bottom left) was welcomed into the home of the Hagan family (right), a BCH foster care family. Through prayer and co-parenting with Malik's biological family (left), Malik's family was successfully reunified. Both Malik and his biological father were baptized together at the Hagan's church.

But the most meaningful work needed more than communication—it required grace.

"It took work on our part to reach out consistently, to not judge where they were or how they got there," Charity explained. "Instead, it was to love them right where they were and respect them as his parents."

This meant leaning into difficult conversations, choosing understanding when perspectives differed and consistently seeing Malik's parents not as obstacles, but as essential to his story.

This meant the Hagans had to be intentional in cultivating the relationship day by day.

beyond required structures. They intentionally leaned into opportunities with Malik's parents to create togetherness, family atmosphere, and wholeness.

"We were not here to replace them. We just wanted to be a safe space to land," Charity said.

They advocated for Malik to experience not just visits—but family.

For his first birthday in their home, they worked with DSS to do something different. With permission, they hosted his biological parents in their home and supervised the visit themselves, allowing Malik to celebrate with his entire family together.

At Christmas, they extended that same invitation. During a supervised visit at church, they set up a Christmas tree, shared cookies and opened presents together. Malik's parents even brought gifts for the Hagan's children.

These moments required effort and trust from DSS, the foster family, and Malik's parents. Even after reunification, the relationship remained. This was evidence that, together, they had created something lasting.

"They always allow him to text and call us anytime," Charity said. "They've never told him he can't talk to us."

That ongoing connection is a reflection of mutual respect and grace.

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Hagans prioritize reunification for Malik's family

(Continued from page 4)

## When the gospel became visible

During Malik's time in their home, something even deeper was taking place. He began to see the love of Christ that was being lived out in front of him. It led to Malik accepting Jesus as Savior.

For the Hagans, it was the answer to their earliest prayers. But what followed was something they describe as unforgettable. Malik and his biological father were baptized together.

"What stood out the most to me in that moment was just the pure joy on Malik's face as he got to watch his father be baptized," Charity said. "The joy on both of their faces afterwards was worth everything."

Even now, the memory remains emotional. "It was literally a picture of the gospel and the heart of the Father," Charity said. "It truly captured the beauty of God's heart for restoration and wholeness."

A father and son, standing side by side, made new, was not just a milestone—it was a powerful reflection of redemption.

## Love completely while letting go

Reunification is the goal of foster care—legally, practically and spiritually. Yet understanding that truth does not remove the weight of the moment when it arrives.

When Malik returned home, the Hagans experienced both joy and grief.

"We went through the full spectrum of emotions," Charity said. "So much joy, happiness, and pride knowing that everything we'd all been working toward was coming to pass. But also sadness and grief as we knew that it meant letting him go."

They had prepared their hearts as best they could, holding their expectations loosely while trusting God with the outcome. It was the balance of loving completely while also releasing willingly.

"We prayed that the Lord would give us

strength to handle however it turned out, and to keep our eyes fixed on the picture of His heart that He showed us through their baptism moment."

## What success truly looks like

In many circles, foster care success is often defined by adoption. The Hagans see it differently.

"The goal is always reunification when safe, and as foster parents, if we don't recognize that as success, then we are missing the point completely," Charity said.

Today, that success is evident. Malik is home with his family. He has a younger sister and continues to grow and thrive. On the soccer field, he runs to his parents on the sidelines, and still introduces the Hagan's children as his brothers.

It is a picture of two families whose stories have come together. And even in the heavy emotions, there is restoration for both of the families.

"Seeing Malik with his family today is the most beautiful thing," Charity said. "We get to see the fruit of obedience and feel the joy that it brings."

## The cost and the beauty

Foster care requires sacrifice. It asks families to open their homes and their hearts, knowing the outcome will often involve loss.

"The cost is breaking your own heart, but the beauty is getting to see a family mended and whole," Charity said.

At its core, Malik's story is not simply about foster care. The Hagans recognize that it a



Above: Malik come out of the baptismal waters with the biggest smile. Inset: Malik's biological dad prepares to be baptized. Below: Father and son share an embrace after being baptized together.



reflection of the gospel—a God who enters into His creation's brokenness and sacrificially offers a way of reconciliation

For Malik's family, the result was seeing one family put their desires aside so another family could be lovingly knit back together.

"Foster care is the gospel in action," Charity explained. "It's seeing something broken and allowing the Lord to make it whole."



# Motorcyclists' passion gains new momentum as Ride to Clyde hits record total of \$369,700

By BCH Communications

Three days, nearly 400 miles of riding, and a group of motorcyclists passionate about children led to a record-breaking fundraising total for the 11th annual Ride to Clyde charity ride. Participating riders raised \$369,700 for Baptist Children's Homes (BCH)—exceeding last year's total by more than \$100,000.

"I could not have imagined that I, along with several others on the final day of the ride, would be holding an oversized check representing such an incredibly generous amount of support," said BCH CEO David Melber. "We are incredibly blessed by how these men and women love the Lord and love the BCH ministry."

Ride to Clyde, produced in tandem with NC Baptists, takes its name from the ride's final destination which is BCH's Broyhill Home in the

community of Clyde. Riders stop at BCH locations along state-wide routes to pray and share their faith.

The funds they raise empower BCH's mission of serving vulnerable children,



Above: Rides gather up to pray at one of their stops. Left: Motorcyclists arrive at Camp Duncan. Right: CEO David Melber with riders Greg and Teresa Shaver.

families, and individuals. Many of the boys and girls served are among the more than 11,000 children in North Carolina's foster care system.

"Whether it's through family preservation, fostering, reunification, or adoption, BCH's

ultimate goal is to impact each of these sweet lives," said eight-time rider Paul Lingle. "The ride is important to me because not only is BCH committed to caring for these children and families, but also—more importantly—its main priority is sharing the hope of the gospel."

Melber also shared updates on BCH's efforts to maximize its resources to serve as many lives as possible.

"It was very encouraging to hear David Melber speak with such passion and conviction," said Tyra Lambert, a third-year rider. "He is clearly seeking and listening to the Lord's guidance. BCH is finding ways to use the resources they have to serve exponentially more people. That's good stewardship."

Ride to Clyde will return in 2027 for its 12th annual event.



## Retreat rooted in lifelong support for birth moms

Ongoing support for birth mothers, whether their adoption journey was recent or years ago, is what sets Christian Adoption Services (CAS) apart. As the adoption arm of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH), CAS understands that walking with an expectant mother through the adoption process is not where the journey ends. According to Sheryl Naylor, Senior Director of Domestic Adoption, it's where ministry begins.

"Gone are the days where women place a baby and it's shrouded in secrecy," she explains. "We recognize the need to care for birth moms and how they navigate grief long after placement.



Birth mothers, who placed children through Christian Adoption Services (CAS), gathered together for the 29th annual Birth Mothers Retreat on April 17-19, 2026.

That's why we continue to host our Birth Mothers Retreat—now in its 29th year."

Held April 17-19, 2026, at the Four Seasons Sheraton in Greensboro, the weekend retreat is designed to foster community. Birth mothers have the opportunity to bond over shared experiences and the loving decision to place their children with Christian, forever families. Birth

mothers receive updates and photos from their children's adoptive families while also engaging in mentoring and discipleship—both from staff and from fellow mothers, like Noelle.

Noelle, who placed through CAS 22 years ago, said she increasingly recognizes how vital that support has been in her journey.

"I was in community with women who had gone through something similar, so I didn't feel alone," she said. "I think CAS puts their care for birth moms up at the top. They want to make sure these women feel the love of Christ."

During the retreat, as God's love was modeled and the gospel was shared, 14 women made decisions for Christ, some choosing to follow Him for the first time and others renewing their commitment to their faith.



Do you know an expectant mom who needs help? Visit us at: [christianadopt.org/birth-mom-support](https://christianadopt.org/birth-mom-support)



# Graduates '26

## BCH YOUTH

Christian Paul graduated from the North Carolina School of the Deaf in Morganton on May 28, 2026. He will be attending Piedmont Community College. Christian was a resident at BCH's Mills Home until he was adopted by Will Paul.



Paul

Autumn Todd graduated from Purnell Swett High School in Pembroke on June 12, 2026. She will be attending NC State University to study engineering. Autumn is a resident at BCH's Odum Home.



Todd

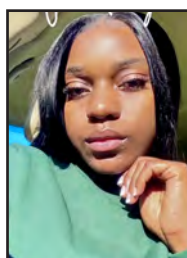
## STAFF CHILDREN

Damian Bluto graduated from Delaware State University in Dover, Delaware, on May 15, 2026. He will continue writing music for several schools while pursuing a master's degree in Music Education. Damian is the son of Mollie Bursich, Western Central Lenoir Foster Care Case Management Supervisor.



Bluto

Tiana Carlton completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA). She will be attending the Community College of Philadelphia to pursue an Associate of Arts degree. Tiana is the daughter of LaToya Carlton, Family Care Worker at Williams Cottage at Kennedy Home.



Carlton

Josiah Cassidy graduated from Randolph Community College in Asheboro on May 13, 2026. He plans to go wherever God directs his path. Josiah is the son of Audrey Luther, Asheboro Home Innovations Support Professional.



Cassidy

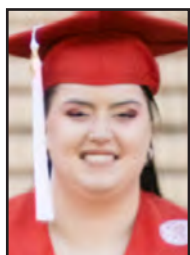
Lydia Grace Chilson graduated from The Oaks Private School in Jasper, Florida, on June 1, 2026. She plans to attend culinary school. Lydia is the daughter of Matt and Jessie Chilson of Kennedy Home.



Chilson

Makayla Ann Fincher graduated from NC State University in Raleigh on May 8, 2026. She plans to pursue work in diabetic gene research. Makayla is the daughter of Morgan Fincher, East

Central Foster Care Case Manager Supervisor. Mason Harrell graduated from Tuscola High School in Waynesville on May 29, 2026. He will attend Rockingham Community College to play baseball and study Finance and Accounting. Mason is the son of Eliza Harrell, Broyhill Campus Director.



Fincher

Jackson Haines graduated from homeschool in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on May 8, 2026, as a Palmetto Fellow recipient and National Merit Commended Scholar. He will attend Anderson University and plans to study abroad in Japan. Jackson is the son of Jessica Haines, CAS Home Study Services Supervisor.



Haines

Abigail Sue Johnston graduated from the University of North Carolina Wilmington on May 8, 2026, with a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science. She will attend East Carolina University to pursue her Doctorate in Physical Therapy. Abigail is the daughter of Kelly Johnston, Eastern Foster Care Director.



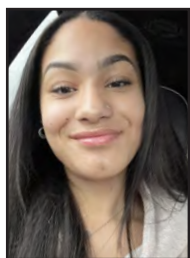
Harrell

Sara Letteer graduated from SC Connections Academy in Fort Mill, SC on May 27, 2026. She plans to work and attend community college. Sara is the daughter of Kim Letteer, Christian Adoption Services Adoption Social Worker.



Johnston

David Allen Marcus, III graduated from Triad Baptist Christian Academy in Kernersville on May 22, 2026. He will be attending Gardner-Webb University to study Criminal Justice Administration. David is the son of David Allen Marcus, Jr., Advancement Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations.



Letteer

Ta' Keba McKinney graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work and earned certifications as a Certified Medical Assistant and Certified Billing and Coding Specialist. She will be working with different agencies in Kinston, North Carolina. Ta' Keba is the daughter of LaToya Carlton, Family Care Worker at Williams Cottage at Kennedy Home.



Marcus



McKinney

Madelyn Blake Ragsdale completed a double major receiving her Bachelor of Social Work and

Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Conflict studies. She graduated on May 8 from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Madelyn is the daughter of Blake Ragsdale, VP of Communications and Editor/Publisher of Charity & Children.



Ragsdale

Hannah Naylor Regitz graduated from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, in May 2026 with a PhD in Communication. She plans to serve as a professor at Liberty University. Hannah is the daughter of Sheryl Naylor, Senior Director of Domestic Adoptions.



Regitz

Hayden Smith graduated from East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, on May 9, 2026, with a Bachelor of Science in Geoscience with a concentration in Geospatial Science. He plans to attend seminary and enter ministry. Hayden is the son of Nick Smith, Senior Director of the Western Area.



Smith

Ryan Virgilio graduated from Cuthbertson High School in Waxhaw on June 10, 2026. He will attend Belmont Abbey College to study Exercise Science and continue his baseball career. Ryan is the son of Laura Nichols-Virgilio, Senior Director of Performance Quality Improvement.



Virgilio

Abigail "Eliza" Ward graduated from Meredith College in Raleigh on May 9, 2026. She has been accepted into the Master of Public Health program at UNC Chapel Hill, where she will study Global Health beginning in the fall. Eliza is the daughter of Heather Ward, Executive Assistant for the CEO on Mills Home campus.



Ward

## STAFF MEMBERS

Lorie Ann Brinkley graduated from Appalachian State University in Boone on May 8, 2026, receiving her Master of Social Work. She serves as Church Mobilization Training Leader and Content Specialist.



Brinkley

Jessie Chilson graduated from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest on May 8, 2026, earning a Master of Arts in Ministry Leadership. She serves as Manager of Greater Vision in Kinston and at Kennedy Home.



Chilson

# The Cross at the Center

May 11, 2026



# Do You Remember? On holding on to the reason you said yes

By Greg Teffertiller | BCH Chief Marketing Officer



**T**here is a peculiar quirk in the way human memory works. We hold onto our decisions far longer than the reasons behind them.

For instance, ask someone why they chose their career, and they'll remember the moment: the conversation, the season, the feeling in their chest. But the specific details that led them there? Those have usually softened. Faded into a general impression of a time when something felt important and true.

Hermann Ebbinghaus, a 19th-century German researcher, called this the forgetting curve: we lose access to information rapidly after first encountering it, until what remains is not the data itself but the impression it left. The decision it produced. The direction it pointed us.

The decisions that matter most are rarely made in a vacuum. They are made in response to something: a story that broke us open, a statistic we couldn't unknow, a child's face, a moment of clarity in a church pew or a living room, a quiet, undeniable sense that God was asking something of us.

Over time, the sharpness of that moment fades. And when it does, we can find ourselves still living inside a commitment we made, still showing up, still giving, still praying, but unable to quite remember why we were so sure.

## Jesus understood this about us

Jesus did not assume His followers would simply remember. On the night before His crucifixion, He sat with His disciples at a table, took bread, broke it, and said something unexpectedly direct: *Do this in remembrance of me* (Luke 22:19, ESV).

He gave them something tangible and repeatable. Not because the event itself would be forgettable in any ordinary sense, but because He understood that human beings need re-entry points. We need moments that pull us back to the thing that changed us. The cup and the bread are not nostalgia. They restore access to the most important information we already have: this is who you were, this is what was done, and this is who you are now because of it.

Peter understood the same thing. Writing to scattered, weary believers, he said: *I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you*

*up by way of reminder* (2 Peter 1:13, ESV). The whole of Scripture is, in many ways, a long act of holy remembering: Israel called back to the exodus, the prophets to the covenant, the apostles to the resurrection. God does not seem embarrassed to repeat Himself. He knows we need it.

## Why what you decided still holds

Perhaps you became a foster parent in a season when a statistic stopped being abstract, when you learned how many children in your county were waiting for a safe place to sleep and the number felt personal. When a family at your church said yes and you saw what happened to a child when someone made room, and you thought: *we could do that. We should do that.*

Perhaps you became a donor because someone told you a story. A child who arrived with nothing and left with a family. A teenager who found faith in a place that refused to give up on him. A mother who was given support instead of judgment and found her way back to her children. And something in you said: *this is worth it. This is where my resources belong.*

Perhaps you are a cottage parent who made one of the most extraordinary commitments a person can make, opening your heart to children who have known trauma and need to experience something different. You knew it would be hard. You said yes anyway, because God called you to it and the children needed someone to.

Perhaps you are a pastor or church leader who said yes to mobilizing your congregation, who saw the vision of a church that doesn't just talk about loving the vulnerable but actually shows up, where prayer warriors stand strong, foster families are supported, adoptive families are surrounded, and rope holders come week after week because they promised to.

**Those decisions were made for reasons. Real ones. And the reasons still exist.**

## The mission has not changed

The children have not stopped needing families. The families have not stopped needing support. The gospel has not lost its power to heal what trauma has broken, to restore what sin has taken, to make something new out of what looked like ruin.

Baptist Children's Homes has been walking alongside children and families since 1885, not because the work has ever been easy, but because the mission has always been clear. We exist to bring children home. Into safe homes,

into loving families, into the family of God. Every foster family we license, every adoption we facilitate, every cottage parent who shows up, every donor who gives, every church that mobilizes: all of it is in service of that same unshifting purpose.

*The children in our care are not statistics. They are image-bearers, loved by God who sees them, knows them, and has not forgotten them. And He has chosen to use you as part of how He makes that love visible and real.*

Your prayer matters. Not as a ritual or an obligation, but because you are asking the God of the universe to move on behalf of children who need Him. That is not small. It is not routine.

Your financial investment is not a transaction. It is an act of worship, a declaration that the kingdom of God is worth funding, placed into the hands of people who have committed their lives to caring for children in the name of Jesus.

Your presence in a cottage home, a foster home, an adoptive family, or a church mobilizing for care is a form of ministry. You are not just providing a service. You are embodying the love of a Father who pursued us when we had nothing to offer.

## Watching the stories unfold

I lead a team with one of the rare privileges in ministry: we get to sit with these stories long enough to know they are true. Moments where needs were met, and the gospel stopped being theoretical and became something a child could touch.

Not every story is simple. The weight of this work finds us too. But beauty from ashes is real, and we get to see it over and over again.

And so is the faithfulness of the people who have said yes to this work and kept saying yes, even when they couldn't fully remember why they started.

At some point, you decided something. The reason is still real. The children are still here. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. And the work, all of it, still matters more than we have words to say.

So hold on to what you know. Come back to it. Let it find you again. Because the reason you said yes has not gone anywhere, and neither has the God who asked.

# Food drive delivers big for BCH

By BCH Communications

**N**orth Carolina Baptist churches once again demonstrated extraordinary generosity and compassion through their participation in the annual Food Roundup, an initiative supporting the ministry of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH). Throughout the month of April, churches and local associations across the state collected and delivered non-perishable food items, essential supplies, and gift cards—helping ensure that children and families served by BCH have their daily needs met.

The outpouring of support this year underscores both the continued strength of the partnership between BCH and NC Baptist churches and the shared commitment to care for vulnerable children. Truckloads of donations arrived, each one representing a tangible expression of the love of Jesus.

“Just the other day, I was reading the testimony of a person who had lived at BCH for maybe five years when they were a child, and they came from absolute poverty,” said Eileen Ansley, who volunteers through NC Campers on Mission to help sort and shelve donated items. “He went on to talk about how, for once in his life, he had three meals a day. He felt he had everything that he needed.

“I’m sure that support helped him to see Jesus.”

Through Food Roundup, NC Baptists provide far more than provision—they offer encouragement, stability, and hope. The collected food and supplies translate into thousands of meals and snacks for children in BCH’s care each year. For many children entering care, reliable access to meals is a foundational step toward healing and growth. Meeting these basic needs creates an environment where



Above and center: For more than a decade members of NC Campers on Mission help sort and shelve incoming Food Roundup items collected by NC Baptists. Below: Members of the Raleigh Baptist Association collected Food Lion gift cards as a part of their efforts.



children can begin to feel safe, valued, and cared for.

But the impact of Food Roundup extends beyond what is placed on a plate.

“When churches come together to give so generously, it paints a clear picture of the love of Christ in action,” said David Melber, CEO of BCH. “It is a powerful reminder that they are seen, loved, and cared for by God’s people.”

For children served through BCH’s ministries, particularly its residential cottages throughout the state, these acts of generosity reinforce the truths they are learning daily from their caregivers. As they hear about God’s love, they also experience it firsthand through the kindness and commitment of churches that faithfully support them.



Food Roundup also serves as a unifying mission effort for NC Baptist churches. It provides an opportunity for congregations of all sizes to participate through a shared purpose: caring for children and families in need while pointing them to the hope found in Christ.

“We praise the Lord for the faithfulness of NC Baptists and the difference they are making in children’s lives,” Melber said.

## Events Calendar:

### Foster Parent Training

**Date:** Wednesday, June 3

**Time:** 5:30pm - 8:30pm

**Location:** Mercy Hill Church, High Point Campus

- BCH is hosting foster parent training which is open to anyone exploring foster care, kinship care, or adoption.

### An Evening with Wolfpack Football

**\* For BCH adoptive & foster families**

**Date:** Thursday, July 9

**Location:** Wendell Murphy Football Center, Raleigh, NC

- A behind-the-scenes football facilities tour, family fellowship, snacks, and a whole lot of encouragement.

### Filipino Heritage Day

**\* For families who adopted from the Philippines**

**Date:** Saturday, July 25

**Time:** 8:30am - 9:00pm

**Location:** BCH’s Mills Home in Thomasville, NC

- A free day of worship, post-adoption support, fellowship, cultural celebration, and a Filipino festival to close it out.

### NC Baptist Church Weekday Education Conference

**Date:** Saturday, August 1

**Location:** Green Street Baptist, High Point, NC

- BCH is holding two trauma-informed breakout trainings at this event for those serving children & families through weekday ministry

### Trauma-informed Trainings

#### Seeing Through His Eyes: Seeing the Hurt & Sharing Hope

- An interactive training designed to equip your church with tools to support those impacted by trauma and create spaces of care and connection.

**Western NC:** Saturday, September 12

8:30am - Noon. Location: To Be Decided

**Eastern NC:** Saturday, September 19

8:30am - Noon. Location: To Be Decided

**Central NC:** Saturday, October 3

8:30am - Noon. Location: Green Street Baptist, High Point, NC

### Thrive: Event for Foster & Adoptive Families

**Date:** August 28-29

**Location:** Mercy Hill Church, Clifton Road Campus

- A two-day event focused on encouraging, equipping, and walking alongside foster & adoptive families.

**Register & learn more:** [bchfamily.org/events](http://bchfamily.org/events)

# Friends of Children spend their Saturdays serving

By BCH Communications



Friends of Children mission days brought out volunteers of all ages. Above: Participants at Kennedy Home, BCH's campus in Kinston, filled up the entire back of the campus gymnasium as they posed for a photo. Below left: Members of Pleasant City Church in Shelby help with landscaping at Mills Home, BCH's campus in Thomasville. Bottom: Volunteers at Broyhill Home, BCH's campus in Clyde, gather up after a day of serving. Below right: Tia and Diondre, who grew up in foster care, helped at Mills Home.

During Saturdays this past spring, Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) campuses across North Carolina came to life with the sounds of service—laughter echoing between cottages, the rhythm of rakes and pressure washers, and joyful, meaningful conversations taking place among those who came together to serve. Through "Friends of Children" mission days, volunteers stepped onto BCH's statewide grounds, not just to complete projects, but to be present in ways that left a lasting impact.



These seasonal mission days offered churches and volunteer groups hands-on opportunities to invest in the ministry. Whether painting, landscaping or helping with routine maintenance, each act of service played a role in creating safe, welcoming environments for the children BCH serves.

Beyond the visible improvements, the mission-focused workdays uplifted the children in care, while also giving volunteers a clearer picture of BCH's overall ministry.

Equally significant



was the way these mission days helped shape the next generation. Designed with all ages in mind, Friends of Children increasingly became a first step into missions for younger participants.

"Because Friends of Children is organized for all age groups, we have continuously seen more and more young people be a part of the day," said Greg Teffertiller, BCH Chief Marketing Officer. "We learned, for many of them, that it was an

opportunity for their leaders to take them on their first mission trip. That is an exceptional blessing for us."

For students and children, the day helped them understand the impact they made beyond the completion of their service projects. They began to see the needs around them and recognized how their time and effort could make a difference, even in simple ways.

"We prayed that the day would be an opportunity for the leaders of our younger participants to

connect the deeper value in what they were doing with a lifestyle of service grounded in faith," Teffertiller explained.



Throughout each workday, relationships naturally began to form. Volunteers working side by side with staff created space for genuine interactions—moments

where conversations shifted from tasks to stories, from introductions to encouragement. It was within these exchanges that new relationships grew.

"We had many first-time volunteers attend that we were able to get to know," Teffertiller said. "Most of all, they modeled the servant's heart of Christ for our children. It is a testimony of His love for them."

# Alumnus attends Texas graduation of fellow alumna's son—June/July alumni updates

By Lib Johnson, (336) 299-7412 [libsjohnson@triad.rr.com](mailto:libsjohnson@triad.rr.com)



**A** note from  
**Cecelia  
Townsend  
Wilkerson:**

Dearest Alumni, I'm reaching out in hope of encouraging you to come back to Homecoming this year. I know so many have different reasons for not coming, but I truly hope we can change your mind. First of all, you are truly missed and so very important to us. When I left Mills Home in 1976 I swore I would never come back. Thank God I did. It has such a different meaning to me now. My brothers and sisters are what make our homecoming so worthwhile. The hugs, genuine love and respect we have for each other fills my heart in a way I can't put into words and do it justice. It's the one place I come to and not feel judged. As a child I always searched for and wanted family, I understand now why my Mills Home, because God gave us the best kind of family. Please come or come back and just see what the Alumni Council does each year to put on this special weekend. See for yourself. Give some hugs, get some hugs. Fellowship with the best bunch of Orphans ever. Hope to see you at Homecoming! July 31s -August 2, 2026—always the first weekend of the first Sunday in August. Sincerely, Cecelia. (Cecelia is the First Vice President-President Elect of the Mills Home alumni Association.)

Shortly after receiving Cecelia's encouraging note about homecoming, I found a note from **Jewel Hoppes** posted on the **Mills Home Orphanage Memories Facebook page**. She said, "I am sending love to all my 300 brothers and sisters from Mills Home. Sadly, a lot of that beloved group has gone on to a better place, but we remember them with fondness and love. I am hoping you have a great turnout. I really wish my

brother **Ivan Hoppes** and I could be there with you for those loving hugs and shared memories. What a home and upbringing we had! Yes, we did! My precious brother Ivan and I became stubborn, strong-willed, survivalists, yet forgiving as we matured to be compassionate adults. Looking back good or bad, we have wonderful brothers and sisters we love and share a story with."

We have tried to find out for several years about the whereabouts of **Bobby and Judy Hargus**, part of the Mills Home family in the 1960's. Sadly, we now know that both are deceased. We learned specifically that Bobby died on March 25, 2026. He was a native of Caldwell County and he spent most of his adult life there, specifically Granite Falls. Bobby had a deep love for classic cars and could often be found fishing whenever he had the chance to relax. He also enjoyed crafting knives, a hobby that reflected his skill and patience. Known for his playful spirit, Bobby loved cruising through the neighborhood in his golf cart, always managing to bring smiles and laughter to his family. Bobby was preceded in death by two siblings, **Larry Powell** and **Judy Hargus Reid**. He is survived by his brother **Ben Minton** and his wife **Cindy**. According to Bobby's wishes, a funeral service will not be held at this time.

With a little more research I found that Judy Hargus Reid had passed away on March 21, 2023 at Amorem Hospice. There were no services for her planned at that time. Judy entered Mills Home in 19??? and graduated in 19??? She also lived most of her adult life in Caldwell County and Hudson, NC. Her final arrangements were handled by Greer-McElveen Funeral Home.

We thank **Pete Knight** for sharing some recent information: "This past December at Brenda Gray's retirement celebration at

Mills Home, there were many Mills Home Alumni. One of the alumni was **LaShonda Crosby** and her son, **Joseph**. I was talking with both of them and Joseph told me he was going into the USAF in February and would graduate April 15th and 16th. He asked if I could come to his graduation at Lackland AFB in San Antonio. **Brenda Gray** and I discussed going to Joseph's graduation to support him and visit with LaShonda and her family. In LaShonda's years at Mills Home, she and Brenda had developed a special relationship so Brenda's attending his graduation was a natural loving development, kind of like a 'granny would do.' My daughter **Kristie** and her husband, **David** are both retired from the USAF and live in San Antonio and agreed to host us with Kristie being our 'Uber Driver.' On Tuesday morning, April 14th, at 6:00 am, both Brenda Gray, **Divine Valentine** (a college friend of Joseph's) and I boarded a plane to San Antonio. We changed planes in DC and arrived in San Antonio early afternoon with Kristie and David meeting us at the airport. After a long wait (6 hours) at Lackland AFB, Kristie finally got Brenda a base pass to attend the Joseph's graduation. (No, Brenda did not end up at Ft. Leavenworth!) LaShonda and her precious little girl **Create** had done a great job of securing us seats for the graduation, so on the morning of April 15th, there we were all together in 'front row seats.' There were several flights of USAF Airmen and several flights of USAF Space Force Guardians. If Judy had been there, she would have said that I was getting 'ReBlued'. During the ceremony, Kristie was able to explain to LaShonda and Brenda what was going on. A grand highlight of the service was that Brenda ('Granny' to Joseph) was blessed to be the one to Tap Joseph out.

This act symbolizes the soldier's transition from training to being a full-fledged member of the military. There were a number of graduates there that did not have anyone to support them. I was honored to be able to support and encourage several of them. Kristie took Brenda and me to the aircraft display area and I showed Brenda the B-52 and the A-10 Warthog, both of which I had worked on while I was in the Air Force.

The next day, April 16th, a grand parade was held. After the parade, we had a good lunch and said our goodbyes. We all had a good time and it was then I remembered that I started my Air Force career 53 years ago on April 3rd and my daughter Kristie had begun her Air Force career 33 years ago in April. It is always an honor to support and encourage my Mills Home family and my Air Force family."

Sadly, last month we had to grieve when we read about the demolition of our beloved Mitchell Cottage Museum. Please rest assured that meticulous work in arranging the Mitchell memorabilia in the building selected to be the "New Mitchell Museum" continues under the guidance of Curator Marilyn Moore. Next month's issue will give you more information on what has been accomplished.

Reminder: Please send corrections or additions of addresses for **Charity & Children** to **Flora Hicks Patton** at [florapatton06@gmail.com](mailto:florapatton06@gmail.com) or 704-795-0017. To learn about a resting place in the God's Acre Columbarium, contact **Sharon DeHart Stiles** at 704-685-2443 or email her at [Sharondstiles51@yahoo.com](mailto:Sharondstiles51@yahoo.com).

Lib Johnson was a resident of Mills Home from 1946 to 1957. Johnson began writing the Mills Home alumni column in 1992.

# News, notes, and stories as Homecoming for 2026 arrives—June/July alumni updates

By James Clayton Pate, (910) 358-0992, 3894 Hwy 41 West, Trenton NC 28585



**D**on Everett Pate (1958-1964) enjoyed his 76th birthday April 19th with his son-in-law **Carl** and stepdaughter **Teresa** at his favorite eating place I was going to crash the party, it was one of my favorite places also, but **Brenda**, his wife, wouldn't share all the information with me. **Joyce** and I took **Don** and **Brenda** out Saturday night at the Pizza inn in Goldsboro to eat buffet. They have been in business since 1970. Joyce and I eat there about twice a month. They have barbecued ribs Friday night and Sunday. They have really nice servers.

I'd like to thank y'all for praying for Don's eyes and mental state. He was a little down in the dumps, having to hang up his hammer and realize that it was time to start taking it easy and let the younger ones take up the hammer and build the barns and houses, along with taking over the roofing jobs. Don's last big roofing job was mine and Joyce's house. He led the way like he was 40 years old again. It was such a blessing to watch Don, his oldest son **Thomas**, and his men work on our house. I had to remain on the ground because of my bad knees and other injuries from the wreck I had in the 10th grade, along with an Army injury from playing football and jumping out of planes. I kept plenty of cold water because it was a really hot day. Thanks again for all your prayers. *From the Pates.*

In 1974, **Charles Butler** (1961-1974) had been a part of Kennedy Home for thirteen years, from Bladenboro, NC. He worked his first summer after graduation from North Lenoir. After that, he continued his studies at Lenoir Community College in business. He enjoyed sports such as basket-

ball and football. His hobbies were hunting and fishing. During his school years, he had been involved in the Distribution Education Clubs of America and the Future Farmers of America. He earned his spending money by working on the farm, in the food locker, and by driving the school bus. Charles Butler is a true child of God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The farming program from 1972-1974 was run by **Mr. Richard Poteat** at Kennedy Home. There were 400 acres of corn, 75 acres of Sudex, 50 acres of hay, and 50 acres of sorghum, some of which were used to feed the cows at Kennedy Home. There were around 100 dairy cows. The cows' milk was sent to Carolina Dairy for processing, then returned to Kennedy in bottles. Kennedy Home also sold some of the milk to Carolina Dairy. There were 25 acres of garden, which contained potatoes, cucumbers, beans, peas, snaps, corn, strawberries, sweet potatoes, and watermelon. There were 600 acres of farming, a hog operation, and the dairy farm, which was run by about eight men, along with about 20 knot-head young adults, one lady as secretary, and a mechanic. Two of the men graduated from NC State. The cow herd originated from Mills Home, located in Thomasville, North Carolina. Kennedy Home constructed a new dairy facility after the town of Thomasville became too large to continue accommodating the dairy business at Mills Home. Kennedy Home supplied vegetables, pork, and beef to support meals for children at Mills Home and Pembroke Home, along with the children at Kennedy Home.

In the '60s and '70s, Kennedy Home was able to teach the children there how to work and not be lazy! Even some of the girls learned how to work—ha-ha!

**Mr. Poteat, Mr. Hensley, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Odell, Mr. Monk, Mr. Simmons** (the mechanic), and others—thank you so much for teaching me, along with the other children (boys and girls), and showing us the way! God Bless each of you! *Sincerely, James Pate*

I have some fond memories of this sweet lady. **Miss Garner** (1954-1971) retired at 65 years old from Kennedy Home. Most of us remember Miss Garner as the relief house parent. Now for the rest of the story. Miss Garner was so sweet to all the youngsters. She had been where a lot of us had. Her mother passed away when she was only four years old. Her father passed away when she was 15 years old. She lived with her sister's family in Rosebud, Wilson County. She left her sister's house to live independently at Kennedy Home, where she cared for children from Lenoir, Jones, Duplin, Onslow, and Pender counties. She was very good at sharing her love with all the hurting children. She was also the dietitian for 11 years at the Lenoir Cottage.

Miss Garner had a block building built behind the Lenoir Cottage with her own money for grilling hot dogs and hamburgers, with the name "Garner Grill" over the door. **Bernard Brantley** used the Garner Grill as a place to learn how to play the drums. You could hear him back there beating on those drums daily. I talked to him one year at Homecoming. He has been beating the drums for fifty years.

Miss Garner served under **W.A. Smith** from 1954-1960, then under Mr. Rogers in the late '60s and early '70s. Miss Garner retired in 1971. She then became a resident at Hamilton Home, one of the five homes for seniors.

**David Bradley** and I talked about an hour a few days ago. We had a great conversation about the

good old days. We also discussed present day, like how he is still a newlywed and loving it!

He also spoke about having a great report at his latest cardiologist appointment. Praise the Lord for all His mercies on us all! God is so good—all the time! For those of you who didn't know, David had a heart attack. It's hard to believe because of the great recovery his heart has made! David would like to thank everyone for the prayers and support that were given to him during this time. He has a very nice Corvette he plans to enter in the car show at our next Homecoming, the first weekend in June.

David has a great brother-in-law who has planned and scheduled a vacation trip to Europe—a riverboat trip—for David and his wife. David will share the memories of his trip when he gets back home.

*Fun Memories of the Kennedy Home alumni in the sixties and seventies:* **Donna Duty** enjoyed roller skating in the gym on Saturdays. **Barbra B. Smith** was excited to be moving to the big girls' cottage (Pollock Cottage). **Debbie Daniels** never moved up to the big girls' cottage; she moved into a family cottage. In the late 1960s into the 1970s, two family cottages were built at Kennedy Home, the Bryant Cottage and the Williams Cottage. They would put brothers and sisters together in these cottages. They closed the cottage that I was in while I was on summer vacation (Canady). I was moved into the Williams Cottage along with **Paul Stone** when I arrived back.

*This month's prayer list:* **Avon Nelson** will have surgery on June 29 after Homecoming. Please pray for her to stay healthy through this delay. Also pray for **Frankie Grant** and **John Thompson**.

James Clayton Pate was a child in care at Kennedy Home from 1958 to 1972. He and his wife Joyce live in Comfort, NC.

# The Three Pillars of Trauma-Responsive, Gospel-Centered Ministry

By Erica Spivey | Senior Director of Training & Church Mobilization

Safety.  
Connection.  
Discipleship.



**G**ospel-centered, trauma-informed ministry matters because both believers and unbelievers recognize that our world is hard, messy, and deeply broken, and many are longing for a better way. The Church knows that

the Gospel—and a restored relationship with Jesus—is the true answer. *Our work is to equip the body of Christ to step into the messy and hard places of life with compassion, seeing people as Christ sees them: image-bearers often held captive by sin and the enemy, yet deeply loved.* When we see others through His eyes, we can recognize hurt more accurately and share the hope of Christ more effectively.

In trauma-responsive ministry, the way we relate to others should reflect the character of God. Just as God models love, care, and guidance, we are called to model Him in our parenting, caregiving, and leadership. The three pillars of gospel-centered, trauma-responsive ministry are safety, connection, and discipleship—each equally important and rooted in the character of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God's Word is our guide. When we ground ourselves in Scripture, we are better equipped to point children and those we serve toward Him, modeling His character in tangible ways. While all members of the Trinity demonstrate these qualities, exploring each individually helps us understand how to emulate them.

## Pillar #1—Safety: The Father's Example

God the Father demonstrates safety throughout Scripture. He calls Himself our rock, fortress, and deliverer (Psalm 18:2). Psalm 91 reminds us

that we can rest in the shadow of the Almighty, finding peace in His protection.

Even when we sin, God pursues us. Consider Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Their sin brought shame and separation from God. They hid, unsure if they could approach Him. Yet, in His grace, God sought them out, creating a way for reconciliation by making garments to cover their shame

Through this act, God provided both physical and relational safety. As caregivers and ministry leaders, we are called to mirror this pursuit—providing safety and security even when mistakes are made.

## Pillar #2—Connection: The Example of Jesus

Jesus is the ultimate example of connection. He left the glory of heaven to walk among humanity, bridging the gap between sinful people and a holy God. He connected by seeing, hearing, and valuing people, drawing them in with kindness.

Romans 5:8 reminds us: “But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus met people where they were, despite their flaws.

Take Zacchaeus in Luke 19. Known as a despised tax collector, Zacchaeus was relationally impoverished. Yet Jesus called him by name and invited Himself to dinner, creating space for connection. Through that relationship, Zacchaeus was able to reflect, repent, and grow.

In ministry and parenting, we are called to practice connection, even with those who challenge us, recognizing that relational trust often precedes transformation.

## Pillar #3—Discipleship: The Holy Spirit's Example

Discipleship cannot occur without first establishing safety and connection. Jesus knew we would need a guide, so He sent the Holy Spirit—

described in Scripture as Helper, Intercessor, and Comforter (John 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit convicts, sanctifies, and leads.

We cannot force change or sanctification in others. What we can do is model discipleship:

- Teach biblical truths
- Guide others toward Christ
- Pray for their growth
- Lead by example in faith-filled action

We intercede, we teach, we encourage—but salvation and sanctification remain God's work. We rely on Him to do what only He can do.

## Walking in the Pillars

As parents, caregivers, and ministry leaders, God calls us to reflect Him through safety, connection, and discipleship. Let His example guide how you relate to children and those in your life:

- Provide a safe environment where mistakes are met with grace.
- Connect with empathy, patience, and understanding.
- Guide others toward truth and Christlike growth without forcing their hearts.

By following God's model, we create spaces for healing, trust, and transformation.

**Thrive!**  
Encouragement & equipping  
for foster and adoptive families

August 28-29, 2026  
Mercy Hill Church • Greensboro, NC

Watch [bchfamily.org](http://bchfamily.org) for more info



# Summer has a way of shaping memories that **last a lifetime.**



## *Because of your generosity,*

children at Baptist Children's Homes experience moments they may never have had otherwise—moments filled with joy, safety, and hope.

For Ethan and his younger sisters, Emily and Eliza, this meant their first trip to the beach. At first, Ethan was afraid. The ocean was new, and when a storm rolled in, he held tightly to his sisters as thunder shook the cottage.

But their cottage parents stayed calm, reassuring them they were safe. And when the storm passed, so did Ethan's fear.

The next day, he was in the water, laughing and playing—creating one of his best memories, a moment that turned fear into joy.

That is what you make possible. You help children not only face life's storms—but move beyond them.

Through your continued partnership, this can be a summer full of memories that shape hearts for years to come. As you consider your giving this year, please know how deeply grateful we are for you. Your generosity turns ordinary days into extraordinary opportunities—and first experiences into **lifelong reminders of God's love.**

## Use my gift to create lasting memories!

\$50    \$100    \$300    \$500    \$1,000    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Any size gift!

There are two ways you can make your gift:

1) By Check: Please use the enclosed envelope and mail this completed form with your check.

2) By Credit Card: Give online scanning the QR code or go to [bchfamily.org/summer](http://bchfamily.org/summer). You can also call 336-474-1312.

I want to receive ministry updates and more. My email: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will.  I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate plans.

